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23 May 1951

Comment on Preliminary Draft NDS-32

1. My only serious objections to your draft, which is by and large excellent, concern paragraphs 8, 9, and 10 dealing with Sino-Soviet relations.

2. These paragraphs are based almost exclusively upon available evidence and do not take into account historical and logical considerations affecting the character of both the Chinese and Soviet Communist regimes. You do allude to such logical considerations in paragraph 34 where, however, such considerations are out of place.

3. In considering Sino-Soviet relations it is essential first to recall the circumstances under which the Chinese entered the Korean war. It should be recalled that the North Koreans were strictly Soviet puppets and a group from which the Yenan Communists had been completely eliminated. The initial invasion of South Korea was therefore strictly a Soviet operation designed to improve the Soviet position to the exclusion of any historic Chinese Communist interest in the area. The Soviets miscalculated and what should have been an easy victory turned into a serious defeat because of US intervention. The Soviets therefore were faced with a dilemma; to have entered the conflict would have exposed the USSR to general war, a contingency which they desired at all cost to avoid. On the other hand, they could not give up North Korea without serious loss of face and without exposing themselves to serious strategic danger. They had two alternatives: (1) to reoccupy the area, and (2) to bring in the Chinese Communists. Why they selected the latter course is not clear, but it must be true that they entered into a hard bargain with the Chinese. The Chinese certainly didn't enter the war merely to help out the Russians. They must have been promised something in return, including possible eventual Chinese domination of Korea. The Russians certainly did not, as is apparent from the evidence, promise the Chinese any military materiel or assistance. Such military materiel as the Russians have available beyond that necessary to maintain Soviet military strength in the FE (which will always be paramount in Soviet strategy) has been and continues to be given to their North Korean puppets. Such defensive and offensive air equipment — ostensibly in Chinese hands but apparently under Soviet control — as has been deployed to China, is not intended for Chinese operations but as part of Soviet defensive system for the FE as a whole. Thus, although the Soviets may have promised to the Chinese under duress that they could have Korea if they could take it, they have done nothing

DOCUMENT NO. _____
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. []
[] DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGE BY: TS SC 1991
NEXT REVIEW DATE: _____
AUTH: HR 707
DATE: 7/11/81 REVIEWER: 008514

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to assist the Chinese in taking it and have built up the North Korean forces as a counterpoise to any possible Chinese successes.

4. Thus, any appearance of improved Sino-Soviet relations must be regarded merely as symptoms of a hard bargain which resulted from a compromise of independent Russian and Chinese ambitions. The Chinese must be becoming increasingly aware that their objective will not be easily attained. They must also be aware of the increasing strength of the North Koreans. It is entirely possible, therefore, if not actually probable, that the Chinese may seek or accept some honorable method of getting out of the conflict and leaving the Russians to develop their own exodus from the unhappy situation. I realize there is no direct evidence of such Chinese thinking. However, they must be aware of the same facts which I have brought out above and therefore will be thinking in somewhat the same terms. When one considers also the historic dislike of the Chinese for the Russians and the well-known Chinese proclivity for doing nothing without some profit for themselves, my reasoning takes on an even stronger probability.

5. Another reason for suspecting that Chinese and Soviet aims in Korea are not identical is the recent approach by Malik at Lake Success. You will recall that he proposed in effect a direct US-Soviet negotiation of the Korean question. The Russians probably would be happy to settle the matter without any reference to Chinese interests or ambitions and, with typical Stalinist contempt for puppets, would toss away any Chinese interests without further consideration.

6. To a rather considerable extent the above ideas are borrowed from Mr. Kennan, who expressed them in a less formidable fashion at Princeton last Saturday. I appreciate the difficulties in writing a paper and coordinating it with reference to the kind of reasoning which I have followed. However, it is also essential not to become a slave to evidence or to the lack of it, but to develop our analysis also on the basis of logical, ideological and historical factors which we must not forget, have the greatest influence upon the Soviet and Chinese action.

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